

How to Protect Your Eyes

- Have an eye exam with dilated pupils at least once a year, even if you see well now.
- Keep your blood sugar normal. If your doctor has given you pills or insulin for your diabetes, make sure you take them regularly. Test your blood sugar. Record the results so you can discuss them with your doctor.
- Have your blood pressure checked often. If you have been given blood pressure pills, make sure you take them even if you feel fine. High blood pressure can quickly make eye problems become worse.
- Call your eye doctor at once if you have blurred vision, double vision, dark spots, trouble seeing at night, or pain or pressure in your eyes.
- If you need treatment, you should be seen by an ophthalmologist (MD).

Test Yourself

1. A person with diabetes should have an eye exam at least once a year.
☐ True ☐ False
2. People with diabetes are more likely than other people to get eye disease.
☐ True ☐ False
3. Diabetic eye disease can be treated.
☐ True ☐ False
4. Diabetic eye disease almost never has early warning signs.
☐ True ☐ False
5. Laser surgery helps control diabetic retinopathy.
☐ True ☐ False

All answers are true.

Protect your eyes! Have a complete eye exam once a year.

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Massachusetts Society of
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Your Ophthalmologists Delivering
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Diabetes Can Harm Your Vision



*Learn what you can do
to save your sight*

**DIABETES
PREVENTION
AND CONTROL
PROGRAM**

*Working together for
prevention and control*

Massachusetts Department of Public Health



Meet Two People with Diabetes



Lenora Wright
Age 67

“My mother and four of my brothers and sisters had diabetes. My family called it *sugar*. My mother was blind, but I did not know then that diabetes may have caused it.”



Arturo Gonzales
Age 45

“I have had diabetes for 11 years. When I began to see spots I went to an eye doctor. She said I had some eye damage due to diabetes and asked why I had not come to see her once a year. I thought I only needed an eye doctor if my eyes gave me trouble.”

These people now know that they should see their eye doctor at least once a year!

Facts about Diabetes and Eye Disease

- Diabetes can damage your eyes.
- Most people who have had diabetes for more than 10 years have some eye damage.
- Finding and treating eye problems early can help prevent blindness.
- Having a complete eye exam once a year is important. It might save your sight!

What is Diabetic Eye Disease?

Diabetic eye disease is a group of problems that may happen to a person who has diabetes. Diabetic eye disease can cause loss of vision and sometimes blindness.

Diabetic Eye Diseases

- **Cataract:** the lens of the eye becomes cloudy.
- **Glaucoma:** the pressure inside the eye rises and damages the optic nerve.

Cataracts and glaucoma can affect people without diabetes too.

- **Retinopathy:** the blood vessels in the back of the eye become weak and bleed and cause damage to the retina.

What is Diabetic Retinopathy?

The retina is the coating inside the back of your eye that reacts to light so you can see. Many small blood vessels criss-cross your retina. Over time high blood sugar and high blood pressure can weaken these vessels, making them leak or bleed. Since you need the retina to see, this bleeding (called retinopathy) may lead to blurred vision and blindness.

What is the Treatment for Diabetic Retinopathy?

A laser beam can be used to repair damaged blood vessels and may help to prevent blindness. Laser surgery may bring back some vision already lost, and will most likely keep the retinopathy from getting worse.

